



Hubbard House in the Fall by Jack Madsen, Good Thunder

“Three years from its founding, Mankato assumed its position as the leading city in population and wealth in the Minnesota Valley and it stands so today. Of thrilling interest is its history and worthy of commemoration the valorous deeds of its pioneers. Wonderful the transformation they have made in turning the wilderness maze into a great orderly emporium of trade. The lonely Indian trail of 50 years ago has become a busy street, bounded with magnificent marts of trade, the forest clad hillside has become lined with stately halls of learning and justice, the swampy valley, flood-torn and thicket-tangled, has become beautiful with palatial homes and magnificent sanctuaries, and the death-like stillness of a desolate waste has been made to pulse with commercial, educational and spiritual life. All honor to the founders of this metropolis of Southern Minnesota, and to all the time-scarred veterans of the Wilderness—the heroes of the log cabin—whose toil, courage and sacrifice have bequeathed to us such a splendid heritage.”

Thomas Hughes, *Mankato—Its First Fifty Years 1852-1902*



City on the River, Mankato, Minnesota

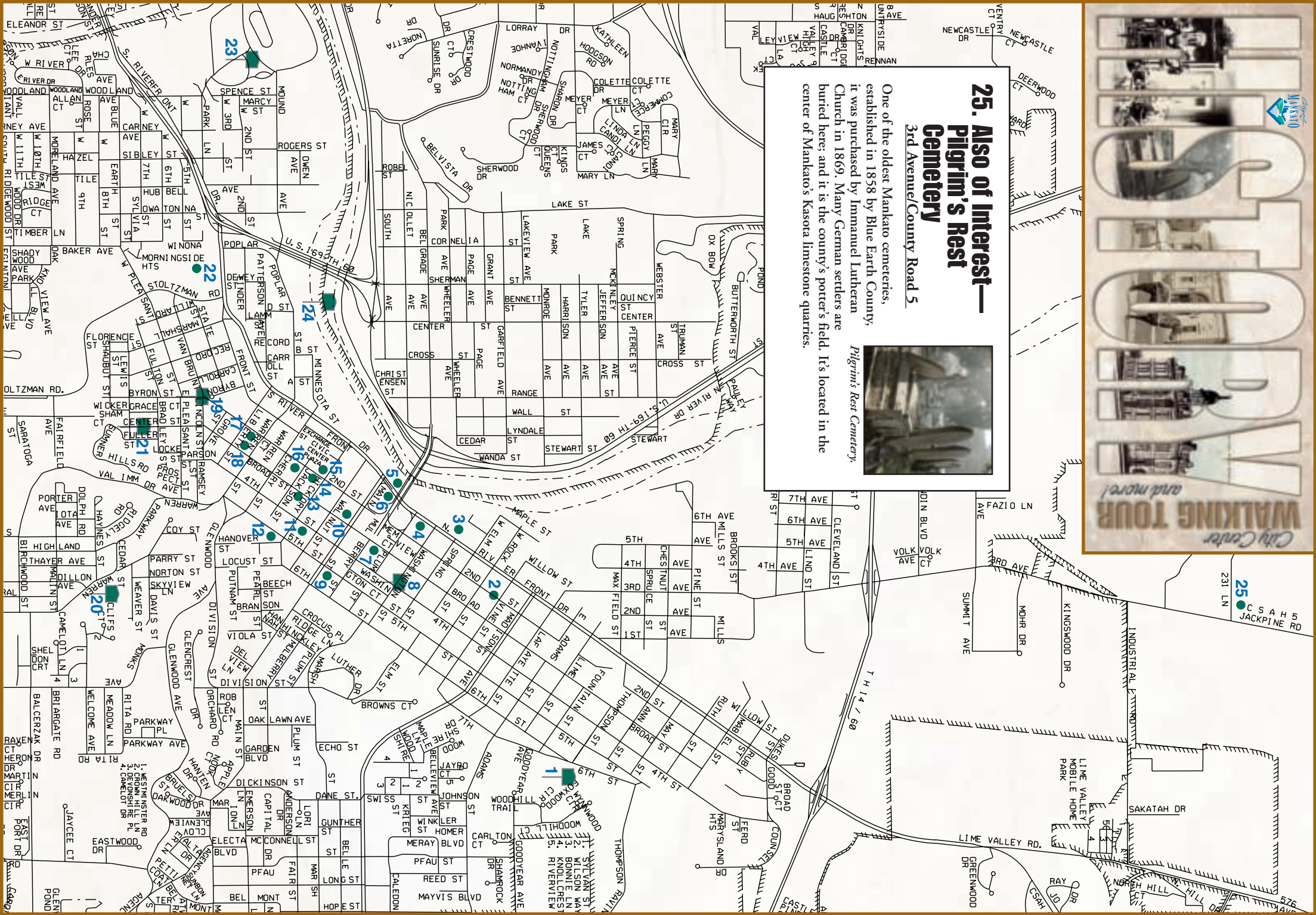
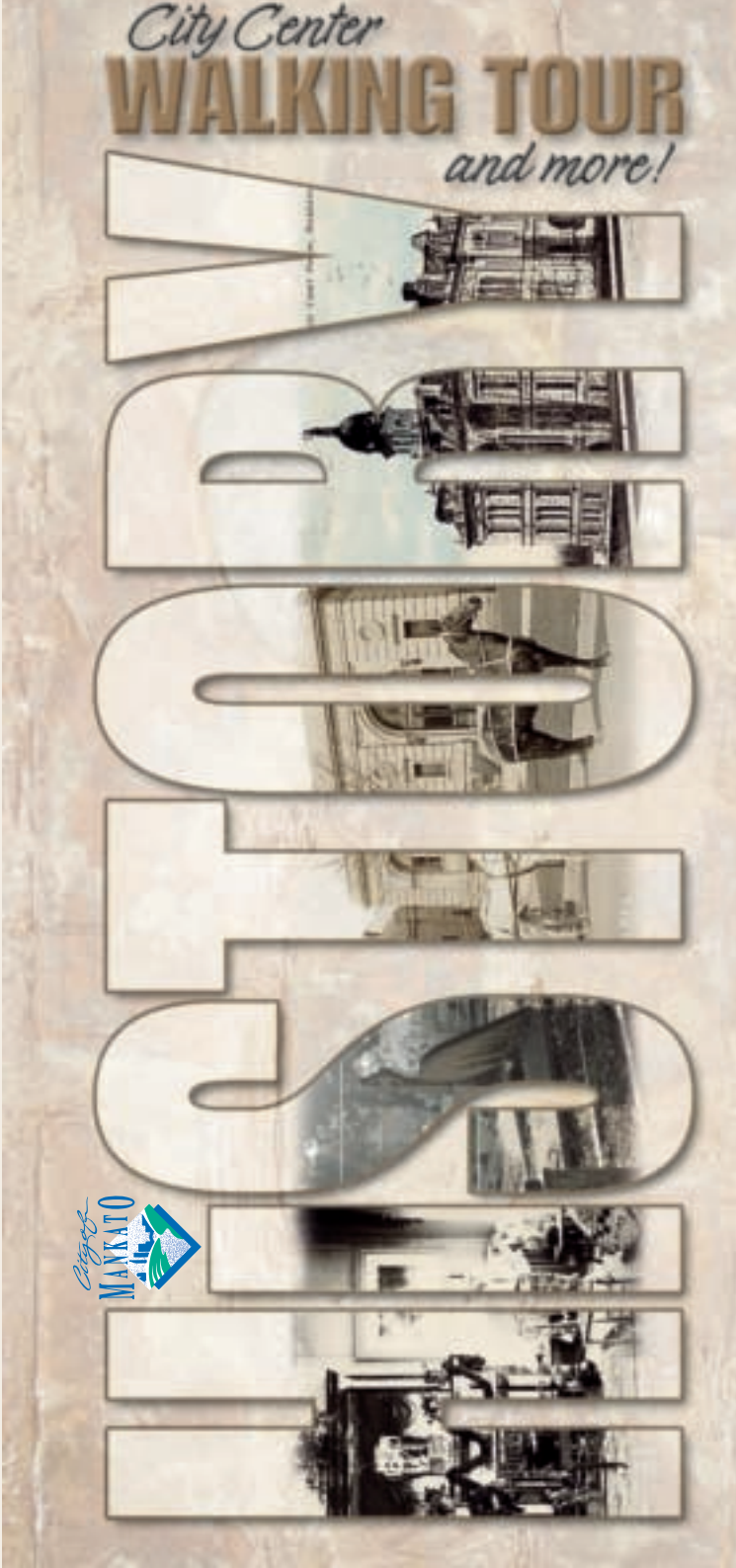


Flowers in Old Town Mankato by Mandy Lamprecht, Mankato



For more information call:
507-387-8516
www.ci.mankato.mn.us

or the
Blue Earth County Historical Society
507-345-5566
www.rootsweb.com/~mnbechs



1. Pioneer Memorial Park

1351 North Sixth Street

This is one of the oldest cemeteries in Mankato. Pioneer Memorial Park, known to Mankato residents as “Pioneer Cemetery,” was the site of two nineteenth-century burial grounds. Memorial Day services have been held at this site since the end of WWI.

2. Save Mor Jewelry

816 North Second Street

This building is believed to be the oldest building in Mankato. The original structure was built of Mankato Kasota stone by George Maxfield, owner of Mankato’s first quarry. It served as the office for the nearby quarry. In the early days of Mankato’s history and especially in the north end of town, it was quite common for buildings to serve dual purposes, such as a dwelling and business.

3. Hubbard Mill

424 Riverfront Drive

Built in 1878 by R. D. Hubbard, it was the largest flour mill in southern Minnesota. It is now operated by Cargill. It was originally a water powered roller mill and then it was converted to steam power. The dominating smokestack is a landmark in Mankato. It is said that machinery inside is essentially the same as when it was installed almost 130 years ago. It represents the strong agricultural industry in Mankato.

4. Old Town

Plum to Vine Streets

Along Riverfront Drive, from Plum Street to Vine Street are 1890s to 1900s commercial buildings, which showcase some of the oldest architecture in town. Industries like the former Hubbard Milling, Bierbauer Brewery and present-day Dotson Company represent some important industries of Mankato’s past and present. Some of the great hotels of this time were located here—Minnesota House, Ben Pay and Burton. This building, once the Stahl House, is a classic 19th-century, two-story structure of soft (local) red brick from across the river in North Mankato. It is trimmed in Mankato Kasota limestone.

5. Reconciliation Park

100 North Riverfront Drive

On September 19, 1997, Reconciliation Park was dedicated. The park is the site of the largest mass execution in U.S. history where 38 Dakota Indians were hanged by the government. This was the result of trials during the U.S. Dakota Conflict of 1862. Tom Miller sculpted the buffalo from a 67-ton block of local Kasota limestone; it is surrounded by native flowers and prairie grasses. The buffalo symbolizes the spiritual survival of the Dakota People and honors the Dakota heritage of this area. The park is a site to reflect, meditate and remember. “A reconciliation for all people.” *Dakota Elder Amos Owen, 1997.*

6. Dakota Warrior

100 East Main Street

The statue “Winter Warrior” was inspired by the “Year of Reconciliation.” 1987 was proclaimed the “Year of Reconciliation” by Governor Rudy Perpich. It was a statewide attempt to foster healing and education between non-Dakota and Dakota People. The statue was unveiled on December 26, 1987, near the site of the 1862 hanging of 38 Dakota Indians. The statue was carved by Tom Miller and weighs two tons and stands six feet tall.

7. Union School

200 North Broad Street

The original seat of education in Mankato is located on Broad Street between Mulberry and Plum at the present site of the Union Office building. On this site there have been no less than three school buildings. The earliest school in Mankato was in a one-story log building, erected in 1855. It contained one room that would likely fit into one end of a current high school gymnasium. In 1867, with enrollment increased, the log structure yielded to the first high school in southern Minnesota. By 1919, the old Union School building yielded to the wrecking ball to make way for a new grade school. Meanwhile in 1891, a new Mankato High School building came into existence on South Fifth Street. Union Grade School ceased operations in recent years and the building is preserved as an office building.

8. Washington Park

215 Fourth Street North

In 1868, the main railroad line was known as the “Fourth Street Route” and the railroad yard occupied the Fourth Street right-of-way from Madison Avenue to Mulberry Street. The timber-framed depot was the showcase on this route. Directly north of the depot, across Washington Street, were a freight house, a four-stall brick engine house, turntable and a nearby stockyard. A branch line of the Mankato Streetcar Railway Company also provided horse-drawn transportation between the depot grounds and downtown Mankato.

The site was officially vacated by the railroad in 1912. Washington Park was dedicated in 1915 by City of Mankato officials, citizens and guests. There was once a massive fountain located in the center of the park.

9. St. Peter and Paul’s Catholic Church

105 North Fifth Street

The church was built in 1873 as the parish church for the German immigrant community in Mankato. A grade school and a high school followed. It has the distinction of being one of the only pieces of land in Mankato owned by the original group. This immense massive Gothic structure stands as one of Mankato’s most visible landmarks.

10. Carnegie Library

120 South Broad Street

Built in 1900 with a grant of \$40,000 from the Carnegie Foundation, the Carnegie Library served as the county and city library until 1977. The broad Roman arches provided abundant light needed in all grand libraries. It has served as a theater and is now a community art center. This building is featured in the book, *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* by Maud Hart Lovelace.

11. Courthouse

204 South Fifth Street

The Blue Earth County Courthouse on South Fifth Street, built of Mankato stone and limestone in the French-Italian Renaissance style, was completed on October 1, 1889, 35 years after the land was surveyed and almost \$50,000 over its original \$75,000 budget. The new courthouse was considered the finest in the state.

12. Old Main

301 South 5th Street

Old Main sat at the center of the original Mankato Normal School (now Minnesota State University, Mankato). This building was built in 1922 after a fire destroyed the original building. Several of the buildings that surround Old Main were once part of the original campus. The Government Center served as Lincoln Library and the Nichols building, Cherry Ridge and Colonial Square apartments were Searing, Buck and Cooper dormitories. As the University grew they expanded on top of the hill in 1958, operating a “highland campus” and “valley campus” (also known as lower campus) until 1980.

13. Sinclair Lewis’ Summer Home

315 South Broad Street

The J. W. Schmitt home was Sinclair Lewis’ family residence during the summer of 1919. The author wrote much of his novel *Main Street* in the house and was fond of taking a horse and buggy out into the bluffs to enjoy views of the Minnesota River valley. Lewis once stated about Mankato, “I am here in this Minnesota town . . . and I like it; like the friendliness, the neighborliness and the glorious sweeps of the country round about.” *Main Street* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

14. Masonic Temple

309 South Second Street

This building was built in 1877 for the Masonic Order. It was remodeled in 1916 to be the building you see today. Its copper-plated metal cornices are a unique feature of this building.

15. Downtown City Center

113 East Hickory Street

Several historical buildings are located in downtown Mankato: the First National Bank, Graif Building, Lasalle and Martin buildings. One of Mankato’s most stylized buildings is the Ellerbe Building (formerly the First National Bank building). It has a unique architectural style—the Prairie School Style, made famous by Frank Lloyd Wright. Notice the use of repeating green stone and red brick.

16. Post Office

401 South Second Street

This building was built in 1895 and remodeled in 1933 to the structure seen today. It is constructed of Mankato Kasota stone. Since it blends seamlessly, you can’t tell the difference between additions. The second floor was used for Federal offices and courts. Those who served our country during the last great wars left from here.



St. Peter and Paul’s Catholic Church, circa 1910.



Carnegie Library, 1912.



Blue Earth County Courthouse, circa 1910.



Old Main, circa 1910.



Sinclair Lewis’ 1919 summer residence.



Masonic Temple, circa 1920.



The Ellerbe Building, a beautiful historic landmark that serves as a reception hall connected to Mankato’s civic center.



Post Office, circa 1930.

17. Cray Mansion

603 South Second Street

Judge Loren Cray built this house in 1897, for his wife, Lulu, at the cost of \$13,000. One of Mankato’s noted architects, Frank Thayer, prepared the plans for the house. This is a two-and-a-half-story Queen Anne with Classical and Romanesque detailing. The structure is of Chaska buff brick, with pink rock-faced granite used at the base of the building. Notice the arches on the rear porch on the south side, and how it is repeated in the brick on the attic balconies. A full-height circular corner tower dominates the house which was built for entertaining. There were three guest bedrooms and a ballroom on the third floor.



Cray Mansion, 1969.

18. Hubbard House

606 South Broad Street

Rensselaer D. Hubbard built this house in 1871. A major remodeling of the house was done in 1888. The house is French Second Empire style. It is constructed of brick and wood on a basement of cut stone. The main house is three stories with a Mansard roof of colored slate shingles. During the remodel, the servants’ quarters, fireplaces, a bay window and office were added and all the woodwork was replaced. The house was described as one of the finest homes in Mankato. It had one of the first telephones, indoor plumbing, electricity and the most modern conveniences of the time.



Hubbard House, circa 1890.

19. Lincoln Park

200 Lincoln Street

Lincoln Park was a gift to Mankato from John H. Ray in the 1890s. In 1893, a bronze statue of a Civil War Union Soldier atop a fountain was added to the park. The fountain and statue were replaced by a stone tablet honoring Civil War Veterans in 1935. In 1900, a Spanish-American War cannon was dedicated as a memorial. In 1909 the cannon was loaded and fired by a group of kids; the blast broke house windows on all sides of the park. A 300-year-old elm tree, affectionately known as the Lincoln Elm, stood proudly at the park until 1984. With a quality blend of 19th- and early 20th-century architecture, the Lincoln Park neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. As it remains today, it is one of the most intact late 19th- and 20th-century well-maintained residential neighborhoods in outstate Minnesota.



Lincoln Elm, 1969.

20. Highland Park

950 Warren Street

A surprising little-known fact about this park: it was used as a recruiting ground and housed Civil War soldiers. In the 1920s, it was a tourist camp, and had a small zoo.



Heritage Plaque at Highland Park.

21. Betsy-Tacy

333 Center Street

This is the childhood home of Maud Palmer Hart. The Harts moved to this home in 1892, soon after Maud was born. She was actually born just down the street at 214 Center Street. Tom and Stella raised three daughters here until 1906. Maud became known as Maud Hart Lovelace, beloved author of the children’s series *Betsy-Tacy*. Maud was the real-life character of Betsy in the series. Tacy’s house is across the street at 332 Center Street.



Betsy’s House, Photo courtesy of Betsy-Tacy Society .

22. Flood Site

1351 Riverfront Drive (Mankato Area Public Schools’ West High School)

It seemed that every three to five years in spring after the snow melted, the Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers flooded gardens and low areas. The snowfall of 1951 was unusually deep. On April 7, LeHillier and Mound Avenue residents realized they were dealing with something much more awesome. That night the swirling, dark flood waters surrounded homes where never before floods had been. For three long weeks evacuated residents stayed in gymnasiums at the Armory or the Teachers College. The greater Mankato area was again hit by high water in 1965.



Mankato Area Public Schools’ West High School, 1965.

23. Sibley Park

900 Park Lane

The City of Mankato, on July 26, 1887, voted to approve \$15,000 in bonds for parks. On October 3, for \$13,000, the city purchased land from the Givens Family estate. The park was named in honor of General Henry H. Sibley, early trader and commander of army forces that defeated Little Crow’s Dakotah in 1862. Sibley camped on the mound as early as 1840 and had a log trading post located about where the Ott Cabin now stands northwest of the mound. On December 19, 1887, the city added the Southern Minnesota Stock and Fair grounds to Sibley Park. There was an oval-shaped racetrack enclosed by a white fence, a grandstand and a judging stand located just south of the mound. In 1893, the buildings were sold and the City Council began converting Sibley Park into a public recreation and amusement facility. Picnicking areas and attention to flowers have long been attractions at this park. A zoo, lake, band shell, wading pool, tennis courts and ball diamonds were added in later years to make Sibley Park the recreation spot known today.



Park Entrance, photo by Laura Behnke, Minnesota Lake.

24. Ho-Chunk/Winnebago

Through treaty negotiations, the Ho-Chunk or Winnebago moved their homes to Blue Earth County in 1855, and by 1863 they were gone. A Heritage Plaque, located where they first arrived along the Minnesota River in downtown Mankato, highlights their history in the area.



Chief Little Hill, circa 1860.

- Heritage Plaque

Photos and copy courtesy of the Blue Earth County Historical Society, (unless otherwise noted).

circa - In approximately; about.

2007